

REMARKS

SUMMARY:

The subject application sets forth claims 1-20, of which claim 1 is an independent claim.

The detailed action dated December 23, 2003 set forth several characterizations of the subject application. Such Office Action objects to the drawings and the specification for multiple respective reasons as set forth in the Office Action. Original claims 4-20 stand rejected to as being improper form because a multiple independent claim should refer to other claims in the alternative only. Original claims 1-3 stand rejected to under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. Furthermore, original claims 1-3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Hanagan et al. (2001/0056362 A1).

Responses to each of the characterizations outlined above, including a traversal of the prior art rejection, will follow in order as presented by the Examiner in the December 23, 2003 Office Action.

OBJECTIONS TO THE DRAWINGS:

The drawings stand objected to under 37 CFR §1.83(a) because they fail to show a labeled representation (e.g., a labeled rectangular box) of every feature disclosed in the description and claims. In response to this objection, the rectangular boxes illustrated in the block diagrams of original Figures 1-5, provided in replacement sheets for Figures 1-5C herewith, respectively, now presently include requested labels. In addition to the numeric reference numbers identifying each rectangular box, respective descriptive identifiers are included.

The drawings stand further objected to because Figure 1 should be designated by a legend such as --Prior Art-- because only that which is old is illustrated. In response, the first replacement sheet provided in Appendix D embodying modified Figure 1 includes a label for Figure 1 identifying it as Prior Art.

The drawings are still further objected to under 37 CFR §1.84(h)(5) because Figure 5 shows modified forms of construction of the same view. In response, the respective views illustrated on the fifth sheet of drawings previously labeled as FIG. 5 are now respectively labeled as FIGS. 5A, 5B and 5C, respectively. Corresponding changes with reference to such drawings in the specification are also presently submitted.

Applicants respectfully submit that the replacement drawings presently provided in Appendix D are sufficient to overcome each of the aforementioned objections to the drawings without entry of any matter relative to the original disclosure. Acknowledgement of same is requested.

OBJECTIONS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

The disclosure stands objected to because of the following informalities: Applicants are reminded that proper section headings should appear in upper case, without underlining or bold type, for each applicable section of the application.

Appropriate section headings for the subject application were not provided at the time of filing the original application as the application was based on certain corresponding non-U.S. versions of the application that lacked the section headings specified in USPTO typical practice. As such, the substitute specification now provided in Appendices B and C (clean and marked-up versions, respectively) include section headings where applicable for the present application.

The specification is further objected to because on page 1, line 13 and page 4, line 7, Applicants cannot refer to claim numbers in the description of the invention since claim numbers are subject to change during prosecution of an application. Again, these references occurred owing to the non-U.S. origins of the materials. As such, these claim references are either removed or amended from the disclosure in the presently submitted substitute specification.

Furthermore, the specification is objected to because Figure 1 is missing in the brief description of the several views of the drawing. In response, a brief description of Figure 1 is provided in the presently submitted substitute specification.

The foregoing amendments do not add any new matter to the specification.

Applicants respectfully submit that the outlined changes in the presently submitted substitute specification provided in Appendices B and C are sufficient to overcome each of the aforementioned objections to the specification.

Acknowledgement of same is requested.

CLAIM OBJECTIONS (CLAIMS 4-20):

Original claims 4-20 stand objected to under 37 CFR §1.75(c) as being in improper form because in U.S. practice a multiple dependent claim should refer to claims in the alternative only. In response, amendments are made to original claims 4-20, respectively, to avoid issues regarding multiple claim dependencies. Such claim amendments do not add any new matter to the specification.

Applicants respectfully submit that presently submitted amendments to claims 4-20, respectively, are sufficient to overcome the aforementioned objections, without entry of any new matter, and acknowledgement of same is requested.

35 U.S.C. §112, SECOND PARAGRAPH, REJECTION (CLAIMS 1-3):

Original claims 1-3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. More particularly, claim 1, at line 7 includes a recitation of “and/or” that allegedly renders the claim indefinite.

In response, the “and/or” recitation in claim 1 mentioned above is modified to a reference in the alternative only.

Applicants respectfully submit that presently submitted amendments to claim 1 overcomes the §112, second paragraph rejection, and acknowledgement of same is earnestly requested.

35 U.S.C. §102(e) REJECTION (CLAIMS 1-3):

Original claims 1-3 stand rejected as being anticipated by U.S. Patent Application No. 2001/0056362 (Hanagan et al.) Based on the following remarks,

Applicants respectfully traverse such alleged anticipation, and request reconsideration of claims 1-3.

Original claim 1 sets forth a customer care and billing system that includes, in part, a system comprising a distributed component architecture including components attributed in correspondence to relevant services offered, wherein the components are able to communicate with each other directly via interfaces.

The December 23, 2003 Office Action alleges that Hanagan et al. discloses all features set forth in present claim 1, including aspects concerning system components (12, 14, 16, 18 and 22) being able to communicate with one another via interfaces as described in paragraph [321].

Although paragraph [321] of Hanagan et al. references that such subject matter is built from components (12, 14, 16, 18, etc.) that have clearly defined interfaces with one another, it is seen from Figure 1 that such interfaces do not necessarily provide for direct communication among the various clients. In contrast, components 12, 14 and 16 in particular communicate indirectly through database server 29.

The feature of having direct communication among components as set forth in original claim 1 is quite significant, as the present application distinguishes such direct communication with known customer care and billing systems. More particularly, with reference to Figure 1 of the subject application, pg. 3 lines 6-14 of the present specification discuss aspects of known systems where at least some modules are directly connected to a central database and are not able to communicate with each other directly via interfaces. Instead, the central database serves implicitly as a significant interface between various modules causing a lot of unnecessary internal interdependencies.

The customer care and billing system set forth in present claim 1 is such that all components (5) are able to communicate with one another directly via interfaces. As described on page 4, lines 8-13 of the present application, when components are able to communicate with each directly via interfaces (as opposed to through a database server as disclosed in Hanagan et al. and other previous systems), a flexible configuration of business logic is facilitated so that customer demands can be fulfilled

with a minimum of implementation modifications. Furthermore, such a system can flexibly and easily be adapted to an increasing amount of processing data.

Based on the above distinctions, Applicants respectfully submit that Hanagan et al. fails to disclose every element set forth in original claim 1, specifically the direct communication among components via interfaces. As such, Hanagan et al. cannot by law serve to anticipate claim 1.

Claims 2 and 3 also stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being unpatentable. Since such claims respectively depend from otherwise allowable claim 1 and further limit same, claims 2 and 3 should also be allowed.

CONCLUSION:

In light of the foregoing amendments and for at last the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully submit that the present application, including claims 1-20, is in complete condition for issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance, and action to such effect is earnestly solicited. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at her convenience should only minor issues remain after consideration of this response in order to permit early resolution of same.

Respectfully submitted,

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